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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S RELATIONS WITH THE ENGLISH RADICALS

BY

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY
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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S RELATIONS
WITH
THE ENGLISH RADICALS



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PREFACE

Benjamin Franklin became familiar with radicalism early in life. At the age of sixteen he became a vegetarian in order to save money to buy Locke's "Human Understanding" and the Port Royalist "Art of Thinking." Before this he had imbibed the philosophy of scepticism from Shaftesbury and Collins. In 1725 he met Bernard Mandeville and his club at a Cheapside ale-house, and found him "a most facetious entertaining companion."¹ During his next visit in England he met David Hume and Adam Smith, and was eagerly sought after by men of science.

Franklin's third visit to England introduced him to the two vigorous Dissenting ministers, Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley, and to Thomas Paine, the author of "Common Sense."

In making this study, I have endeavored to show the relations that existed between Franklin and the English radicals as revealed in their friendships, letters, and works, and I have tried to show that radicalism was as vital and early a factor in American politics as it was in the political life of England.

¹
Writings, Vol. 1, P. 278.

I.

FRANKLIN THE RADICAL

Franklin's radicalism was inevitable. He was born to it, he cherished and cultivated it, and he was fitted by temperament and natural ability to make expediency successful, because of it.

His father, driven out of England by the Conventicle Act, came to New England so that he could enjoy his "mode of religion with freedom."¹ His mother was the daughter of Peter Folger, one of the first settlers of New England, who was honorably mentioned in Cotton Mather's history, as "a godly, learned Englishman." He was distinguished, even among his radical neighbors, by his zeal for religious freedom, having written an address to the government of his colony "in favor of liberty of conscience, and in behalf of the Baptists, Quakers, and other sectaries that had been under persecution, ascribing the Indian wars, and other distresses that had befallen the country, to that persecution, as so many judgments of God to punish so heinous an offense, and exhorting a repeal of those uncharitable laws."²

Franklin's father destined him for the church, and with this end in view he sent him to the grammar-school, while his uncle proposed to give him "all his short-hand volumes of sermons." Although he made rapid progress in school, his formal education came to an end in his tenth year, when he informed his father that he did not wish to become a minister, but wanted to go to sea instead. He was fond of reading and read everything that came in his way, even his

¹ Writings, ed. by Smith, Macmillan & Co., New York, 1907, Vol. i, p. 231, ² Ibid. p. 231.

father's little library consisting "chiefly of books in polemic divinity." Among these books was one, Mather's Essay to do Good, which gave him a "turn of thinking" that had an effect on some of the principal future events of his life.

He had been religiously educated as a Presbyterian, but very soon, he says, "some of the dogmas of that persuasion, such as the eternal decrees of God, election, reprobation etc. appeared to me unintelligible, others doubtful, and I early absented myself from the public assemblies of the sect."¹ He was, however, never without some religious principles. Though he doubted Revelation, he believed, he says, "the existence of the Deity, that he made the world and governed it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished either here or hereafter."² He regarded these as the essentials of every religion, and as he found them in all the religions in the country, he came to look upon all religions with a respect proportional to the degree in which he found his own beliefs in them. "This respect to all, with an opinion that the worst has some good effects, induced me to avoid all discourse that might tend to lessen the good opinion another might have of his own religion; and as our province increased in people, and new places of worship were continually wanted, and generally erected by voluntary contribution, my mite for such purpose, whatever might be the sect, was never refused."³

¹Ibid. Vol. i, p. 324.

²Ibid. p. 325.

³Ibid.

He had a high sense of the propriety and utility of public worship, but finding the Sunday service "uninteresting and unedifying, since not a single moral principle was inculcated or enforced," he devoted his Sunday to study, choosing to be a good citizen rather than a Presbyterian.

To this end he drew up for himself "a little liturgy or form of prayer-- entitled Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion."¹ It is a frank confession of the Deism, in which he was confirmed at the age of fifteen, and may be summed up in his resolution, "Let me resolve to be virtuous, that I may be happy, that I may please Him, who is delighted to see me happy."² This pursuit of virtue to which he pledged himself was no light task, but an arduous labor, calling for the most scrupulous care and the most exacting self-discipline. He selected from a list of all the virtues, twelve, which seemed the most useful, and set himself deliberately to acquire them in the following order; temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquillity and chastity. At the suggestion of a Quaker friend he added humility to his list, taking for his models Jesus and Socrates.

He became so enamored of the pursuit of virtue that he was anxious to form a United Party for Virtue. This he would have called "The Society of the Free and Easy: free, as being, by the general practice and habit of the virtues, free from the dominion of vice; and particularly by the practice of industry and frugality, free from debt, which exposes a man to confinement, and a species

¹Ibid. p. 326.

²Ibid. Vol. ii, p. 94.

of slavery to his creditors."¹ He had observed that few men act with a view to the good of their country, and "fewer still in public affairs act with a view to the good of mankind." He believed that the most acceptable service of God was doing good to man, and so he endeavored to make himself useful in this service by devoting some space in his Almanack to little proverbs, "such as inculcated industry and frugality, as means of procuring wealth, and thereby securing virtue; it being more difficult for a man in want, to act always honestly, as, to use here one of those proverbs, it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright."²

His pursuit of virtue was utilitarian in its aim, and tended to the cultivation of "that Benignity of Mind which shows itself in searching for and seizing every Opportunity to serve and to oblige; and is the Foundation of what is called Good Breeding;-- Ability to serve Mankind, one's Country, Friends, and Family; which Ability is (with the Blessing of God) to be acquired or greatly increased by true Learning; and should indeed be the great Aim and End of all Learning."³ He intended to write a treatise on the art of virtue, but he says, "the necessary close attention to private business in the earlier part of my life, and public business since have occasioned my postponing it," and so we have never had the "great and extensive project, that required the whole man to execute."⁴

There was nothing mystical, nothing romantic in Franklin's religion. He received his first impulse to the development of an independent system of religion and morality based on virtue, from

¹Ibid. Vol. i, p. 341.

²Ibid. pp. 342-343.

³Ibid. Vol. ii, p. 396.

⁴Ibid. Vol. i, p. 337.

Locke, "a great writer" in his opinion. This was supplemented by the Art of Thinking of the Port Royalists, and finally he gleaned from Collins and Shaftesbury just enough of the Deistic principles they professed, to make his religion comfortable and respectable, but never aggressive and bitter. In building up his "Christian edifice,"¹ he would turn his house upside down, so that Charity would occupy the ground floor, and Faith and Hope would be transferred to the attic. It was a new and purely personal religion from which were excluded the services and traditions of the past, but which retained all its benevolence and charity touched with prudence and common sense.

Franklin's political attitude is more complex. It was shaped by necessity, and developed to meet the occasions as they were forced upon him by a peculiar situation which found him at the center in every crisis.

His preliminary political training was received at the Junto, a little debating society of twelve members, who were united by a common interest in morals, politics, and philosophy. The club was found so useful, and gave so much satisfaction that some of the members wanted to bring in their friends. Franklin opposed this idea,"but, instead of it, made in writing a proposal, that every member separately should endeavor to form a subordinate club, with the same rules respecting queries etc., and without informing them of the connection with the Junto."² The advantages proposed were the improvement of a larger number of citizens, a better acquaintance with the general sentiments of the people as a whole, but

¹ Ibid. Vol. iii, p. 460.

² Ibid. Vol. i, p. 349.

especially the promotion of their own particular interests in business by extensive recommendation, and the increase of their influence in public affairs and in the power of doing good by spreading the sentiments of the Junto.

It was a splendid training in organization and leadership, and as a result of it, Franklin emerged as the Clerk of the General Assembly in 1736, and the Junto became a political organ of the Colony. He turned his attention to public affairs, beginning with small matters that needed improvement, and the ideas being approved by the Junto, were communicated to other clubs, and in this way he was able to impose his mind on the public by creating a public opinion in favor of his projects.

In 1754 he proposed a plan for the union of the colonies, but it met with opposition from England as granting too much power to the colonies, while the colonies opposed it for giving too much power to England. Twenty years later, the colonies formed this union without the consent of the Mother Country, proving the truth of Franklin's assertion, that it was "absolutely necessary for their preservation." Preparedness was one of Franklin's favorite doctrines. "The very Fame of our Strength and Readiness would be a means of Discouraging our Enemies.-- The way to secure Peace is to be prepared for War."¹

It was, however, the interest of Great Britain that Franklin had most at heart. He was an enthusiastic Englishman, ambitious for the British occupation of America, and fearful of an injudicious treaty that would leave France in possession of Canada and Louisiana, to be a menace to colonial expansion. For the same reason he protested

¹ Ibid. Vol. ii, p. 352.

against the government's policy of commercial interference and restriction of trade, seeing in the crippling of the members, a weakening of the whole nation.

Like all good Whigs, Franklin had a high respect for property, and he opposed the passage of the Stamp Act on the grounds of its cruelty and injustice. In spite of his opposition, the bill passed, and Franklin accepted the defeat with philosophical serenity. He says "I took every step in my power to prevent the passing of the Stamp Act.--But the Tide was too strong against us.-- We might as well have hindered the sun's setting. But since 'tis down,-- and it may be long before it rises again, let us make as good a night as we can of it.-- Frugality and Industry will go a great way toward indemnifying us. Idleness and Pride tax with a heavier hand than Kings and Parliaments; if we can get rid of the former, we may easily bear the latter.¹"

The Americans were of a different mind, and when the news of the adoption of the hated measure reached the colonies, Franklin was regarded as a betrayer of their trust. But with his customary sagacity, Franklin grasped the situation, threw himself unreservedly into the cause of his constituents, clothed himself "from head to foot in Woollen and Linnen" of his wife's manufacture, and proved his loyalty in a six weeks' searching examination before the bar of Parliament. The Stamp Act was repealed, and Franklin again became the good Englishman sending Deborah material for a new gown, "a fine Piece of Pompadour Satin, 14 yards, cost 11 shillings a yard," together with cambrics, laces, threads and fine linen table cloths all made in the Mother Country.

¹

Ibid. Vol. iii, p. 390.

Franklin's efficiency was once more recognized by the colonists and after the Boston Massacre Franklin was chosen to represent colonial interests in England. His policy was a conciliatory one, and he labored incessantly for a peaceful settlement of the differences, so as "not to suffer by their little Misunderstandings, so glorious a Fabric as the present British Empire to be demolished by these Blunders."¹

When he reached America in May 1775, he found that war had actually begun. With the ardor of a youth and the prudence of a sage, he gave to his compatriots the great wealth of his experience in organization, and undertook to finance the war. He became the ardent champion of liberty. Out of his shattered fabric of empire, was woven a fairer and a nobler dream, that of a human fatherland, based on universal brotherhood and the rights of man. The idea had been developing within him, since it was first enkindled by his contact with the determined spirit of American radicalism in 1765. It had been recognized by Du Pont de Nemours, who said, "Avant ce temp, Monsieur, je connoissais bien de vous le Savant, le Geometre, le Physicien, l'homme à qui la nature permet de dévoiler ses secrets. Despres ce temp Monsieur le Docteur Barbeu du Bourg mon ami a bien voulu me communiquer plusieurs de vos écrits relatifs aux affaires de votre patrie. J'ai pris la liberté d'en traduire quelques-uns. J'y ai reconnu à chaque page le philosophe citoyen occupé avec génie du bonheur de ses frères et des intérêts le plus chers de l'humanité."²

¹

Ibid. Vol. vi, p. 319.

² Ibid. Vol. v. pp. 153-154.

David Hume had recognized it, and regretted that England had not the same regard for wisdom as she had for gold. She took care never to send back an ounce of gold, once her fingers had been on it, but she let a philosopher leave the country without a sign of regret.

Franklin, himself, saw that he had within him, a spirit of world nationality that England did not comprehend. He felt it in the Americans, and responded to every stimulus that came from them. "I am sorry," he said, when speaking of the national prejudices of England, "to find that that wisdom which sees the welfare of the parts in the prosperity of the whole, seems yet not to be known in this country."¹ This strong sense of universal brotherhood made him deprecate the horrors of war, not only for its wanton waste of life, but also because of its immense drain of the economic resources. In a letter to Sir Joseph Banks he wrote, "I join with you most cordially in rejoicing at the return of Peace. I hope it will be lasting, and that Mankind will at length, as they call themselves reasonable creatures, have Reason and Sense enough to settle their differences without cutting throats; for in my opinion, there never was a good War, or a bad Peace. What vast additions to the Conveniences and Comforts of the Living might Mankind have acquired, if the Money spent in Wars had been employed in Works of public utility! What an extension to Agriculture, even to the Tops of our Mountains: what Rivers rendered navigable, or joined by Canals; what Bridges, Aqueducts, new Roads, and other public Works, Edifices, and Improvements, rendering England a compleat Paradise, might have been

¹ Ibid. p. 155.

obtained by spending those Millions in doing good, which in the last War have been spent in doing Mischief; in bringing Misery into thousands of Families, and destroying the Lives of so many thousands of working people, who might have performed the useful labor."¹ Again on this same question he wrote, "Justice is as strictly due between neighbor Nations as between neighbor Citizens. A Highwayman is as much a Robber when he plunders in a Gang, as when single; and a Nation that makes an unjust War, is only a great Gang."²

Franklin regarded suffrage³ as a common right of man,⁴ and he was also a firm believer in equal suffrage for states. He apprehended no danger from the liberty-loving Americans giving too much power to their governors, but he saw some danger "from too little obedience of the governed." Woman suffrage, however, had no place in his political theory. When he wanted to send a present to his sister, who had grown to be a celebrated beauty, he considered "that the character of a good housewife was far preferable" to anything else, and so he sent her a spinning-wheel, "as a small token of his love and affection." The world of politics in which Franklin moved, was a man's world, although he played chess and discussed mathematical problems with the sister of Lord Howe, who was working for her brother's political interests. He was opposed to slavery on the grounds of its lack of humaneness, as well as its inutility. In 1789, as president of the Abolition Society he signed the memorial presented to the House of Representatives begging them to discourage the inhuman traffic. The next year he wrote an essay for the Fed-

¹Ibid. Vol. ix, p. 74.

³Appendix I.

²Ibid. p. 296.

⁴Ibid. Vol. x, p. 130.

eral Gazette in which he showed the futility of the arguments in defense of the trade.

In this as in every other issue, Franklin knew when to act, as he said, "it is not only right to strike while the iron is hot, but -- it may be very practicable to heat it by continually striking."¹ This he did fearlessly and manfully, dominated throughout his life, in spite of the variety of influences that reacted on him, by the Puritan conviction that "truth, sincerity, and integrity in dealings between man and man were of the utmost importance to the felicity of life."² His radicalism was not the passionate expression of a fervid enthusiasm. It was a plant of a sturdier and surer growth, sprung from the Puritan heritage that showed itself in the boy of ten. Long before he inspired Paine and Price to popularize the principles manifested by the American Revolution, Franklin had enjoyed the privileges of a national group emancipated by the very non-conformity that gave them birth in a new and untried land.

¹Ibid. Vol. viii, p. 457.

²Ibid. Vol. i, p. 296.

II.

FRANKLIN'S RELATIONS WITH PAINE

Carlyle says that Paine, a "rebellious, unkempt staymaker," felt that he, "a single Needleman, did by his Common Sense Pamphlet free America."¹ Paine was not alone in this idea. In January 1776, George Washington said, "The sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning contained in Common Sense will not leave numbers at a loss to decide upon the propriety of a separation."² Two months later he wrote, "I find Common Sense is working a powerful change in the minds of many men."³

Paine wrote Common Sense the "latter end of 1775, and published it the first of January 1776. Independence was declared the fourth of July following."⁴ Samuel Adams said, "Your Common Sense and your Crisis unquestionably awakened the public mind, and led the people loudly to call for a Declaration of our national Independence."⁵ And yet Paine says he had no disposition for "what was called " politics. "The natural bent of my mind was to science. I had some talent for poetry; but this I rather repressed than encouraged, as leading too much into the field of imagination. As soon as I was able, I purchased a pair of globes, and attended the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson, and became afterwards acquainted with Dr. Bevis, of the society called the Royal Society, then living in the Temple, and an excellent astronomer."⁶ Paine was at this

¹ "French Revolution," Centenary Edition, Vol. ii, p. 21.

² Writings, Ed. by Ford (1889) Vol. iii, p. 396. ³ Ibid. Vol. iv. p. 4.

⁴ Writings, Ed. by Conway (1899) Vol. iv. p. 6. ⁵ Ibid. p. 201.

⁶ The Age of Reason, Writings, Vol. iv, p. 63.

time employed by Mr. Gardiner in his school at Kensington, and had not passed five minutes in which he did not acquire some knowledge.¹ It was in this year that he became acquainted with Benjamin Franklin of whom he said in 1797, "Dr. Franklin has been my intimate friend for thirty years past,"² and to whose influence are due Paine's political achievements. It was a common interest in science that drew these two men together, and the formal introduction was made by George Lewis Scott, Paine's excise employer, who labored assiduously in Paine's behalf, and whom Paine esteemed as "one of the most amiable characters I know."³

Franklin advised Paine to go to America, and provided him with a recommendation as an "ingenious, worthy young man." He asked Richard Bache to give him his "best advice and countenance" and finally asked him to "put him in a way of obtaining employment as a clerk, or assistant tutor in a school, or assistant surveyor, (of all which I think him very capable)-- till he can make acquaintance and obtain a knowledge of the country."⁴ Paine arrived in America November 30, 1774, and on March 4, 1775 he wrote to Franklin from Philadelphia; "Your countenancing me has obtained for me many friends and much reputation for which please accept my sincere thanks. I have been applied to by several gentlemen to instruct their sons on very advantageous terms to myself, and a printer and bookseller here, a man of reputation and property, Robert Aitken has lately attempted a magazine, but having little or no turn in that way himself he has applied to me for assistance."⁵ Paine edited this magazine for eighteen

¹ Life, Vol. i, p. 19.

³ Ibid. p. 430.

⁵ Life, Vol. i, p. 40.

² Writings, Vol. iv., p. 15.

⁴ Writings, Vol. vi, pp. 246-249.

months at a salary of fifty pounds a year. A feature of the magazine was the description of new scientific inventions, and this attracted the attention of Franklin's Philosophical Society, and Paine was given a warm welcome into their midst.

Franklin returned to America in 1775, reaching Philadelphia on the 6th of May. His arrival was announced "by ringing of bells to the great joy of the city." The tories hoped for some good from his return, believing that his knowledge and experience would induce Congress to listen to his judgment.¹ But Franklin came, not to induce the patriots to return to the Mother Country as the tories hoped, but to finish the work that Paine had just begun. Paine says, "In October 1775 Dr. Franklin proposed giving me such materials as were in his hands towards completing a history of the present transactions, and seemed desirous of having the first volume out the next spring. I had then formed the outlines of Common Sense and finished nearly the first part; and as I supposed the doctor's design in getting out a history was to open the new year with a new system, I expected to surprise him with a production on that subject much earlier than he thought of; and without informing him of what I was doing, got it ready for the press as fast as I conveniently could and sent him the first pamphlet that was printed off."² When the pamphlet appeared it was for a time believed to have come from Franklin.

Franklin had written to Dr. Priestley just after his arrival in America, "The breach between the two countries is grown wider, and

¹Journal of Samuel Curwen, New York, 1845, p. 27.

²Life, Vol. i, p. 214.

in danger of becoming irreparable."¹ In September he wrote to Jonathan Williams, "But whether America is ever again to have any connection with Britain either Commercial or Political is at present uncertain. All depends on that Nation's coming to its Senses. Here we are preparing and determining to run all Risques rather than comply with her mad Demands;"² and in October he said, "A separation of course will be inevitable."³ In December he wrote to His Most Serene Highness, Don Gabriel, of Bourbon, who had sent him a copy of the version of Sallust printed in 1772.⁴ "I wish I could send from hence any American literary Production worthy of your Perusal; but as yet the Muses have scarcely visited these remote Regions. Perhaps, however, the late Proceedings of our American Congress, just published, may be a subject of some Curiosity at your Court. I therefore take the Liberty of sending your Highness a Copy, with some other Papers, which contain Accounts of the successes wherewith Providence has lately favored us. Therein your wise Politicians may contemplate the first efforts of a rising State, which seems likely soon to act a Part of some Importance on the Stage of Human Affairs and furnish materials for a future Sallust."

Paine expresses Franklin's thought in Common Sense, but colors it for the multitude for whom it was intended. "The authority of Great Britain over this continent is a form of government, which sooner or later must have an end."⁵ "The⁶ birthday of a new world is at hand, and a race of men, perhaps as numerous as all Europe

¹ Writings, Vol. vi, p. 400.

² Ibid. p. 429.

³ Ibid. p. 431.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 436-437.

⁵ Writings, Vol. i, p. 89.

⁶ Ibid. p. 119.

contains, are to receive their portion of freedom from the events of a few months."

The spirit that impelled Franklin to return to America in 1775 was the spirit that impelled him to send his ingenious young friend to America. Franklin had preached his "unite or die" doctrine well, but it had only influenced the handful of radical leaders who came into direct contact with state affairs. Franklin's keen vision saw in Paine, who was capable of fulfilling a position as assistant tutor or assistant anything, until he learned America's need of him, the medium through whom the spirit of independence must reach the people. While Franklin was telling the illustrious prince of Spain that he would soon behold the birth of a new nation, his worthy young friend was moving the minds of the people, and exhorting them to unite or die; ¹ "Wherefore instead of gazing at each other, with suspicious or doubtful curiosity, let each of us hold out to his neighbor the hearty hand of friendship, and unite in drawing a line, which like an act of oblivion, shall bury in forgetfulness every form of dissention. Let the names of whig and tory be extinct; and let none other be heard among us than those of good citizen; and open and resolute friend; and a virtuous supporter of the Rights of Mankind and of the Free and Independent States of America."

Franklin called it a "famous piece" and said it "had prodigious effects"² at the beginning ³ of the Revolution, and greatly "forwarded" it. Paine said, "When I turned my thoughts toward matters of government, I had to form a system for myself, that accorded with

¹ Ibid. p. 120.

² Writings, Vol. ix, p. 562.

³ Ibid. p. 565.

the moral and philosophic principles in which I had been educated."¹
 He believed that America's cause was the cause of Humanity. "The independence of America, considered merely as a separation from England, would have been a matter but of little importance, had it not been accompanied by a revolution in the principles and practice of governments. She made a stand not for herself only, but for the world, and looked beyond the advantages herself could receive."²

Franklin spoke of it as the "cause of Liberty and America," and he longed for the return of "Peace on the general Principles of Humanity."³ Paine recognized this quality in Franklin, when he said he "was not the diplomatic of a Court, but of Man."⁴

After the Declaration of Independence was adopted, Franklin had to work to find the substantial aid that was needed to obtain the freedom that they had declared. To Paine fell the work of developing within the state, the spirit of independence that was born from Common Sense. It is certain that America's Freedom could not have been obtained without the financial help secured from France, and no one could have obtained that help without the influence of Franklin. But it is equally certain that America's Independence had to be fostered at home, and no influence was so important, and no single force so efficient in securing this support as Paine's Crisis. "I found," he says, "the dispositions of the people such, that they might have been led by a thread and governed by a reed. Their suspicion was quick and penetrating, but their attachment to Britain was obstinate.-- They disliked the Ministry, but they esteemed the

¹ Writings, Vol. iv, p. 63.

³ Writings, Vol. iii, p. 454-455.

² Ibid. Vol. ii, p. 401.

⁴ Writings, Vol. ii, p. 335.

Nation."¹ Paine knew his power. In the Age of Reason he said, "I believe I should never have been known in the world as an author on any subject whatever, had it not been for the affairs in America."²

The Crisis shows the peculiar ingenious quality that Franklin recognized in the man. He does not blame the Americans for their attachment to the Mother Country. He listens to their unspoken protest against the harshness of a parent, and, with genuine sympathy, he cries, "These are times that try men's souls."³ Then he praises their aspiration. "Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as Freedom should not be highly rated."⁴ He does not urge them to fight, he lets them hear him assure Lord Howe that the Americans will maintain their independence against the world. He does it all consciously, and confides to Franklin, that he feels the pleasure of having done his duty, adding, "I feel that of not having discredited your friendship and patronage. I live in hopes of seeing and advising with you respecting the History of the American Revolution, as soon as a turn of affairs makes it safe to take a passage for Europe."

Franklin had been in France since December 4th 1776, and while he was the official minister to France, he used the occasion to cultivate a popular opinion in favor of American liberty. This gave immense support to Paine's work at home, and fired, in no small measure, the courage of the leaders. In May 1777, he wrote to Samuel Cooper, "All Europe is on our Side of the Question, as far as

¹ Life, Vol. ii, p. 435.

³ Writings, Vol. i, p. 170.

² Writings, Vol. iv, p. 63.

⁴ Ibid. p. 393.

Applause and good Wishes can carry them.-- They read the Translations of our Separate Colony Constitutions with Rapture; and there are such numbers everywhere, who talk of Removing to America with their Families and Fortunes as soon as Peace and our Independence shall be established, that 'tis generally believed we shall have a prodigious Addition of Strength, Wealth, and Arts from the Emigrations of Europe; and 'tis thought, that, to lessen, or prevent, such Emigrations, the Tyrannies established there must relax, and allow more Liberty to their people. Hence 'tis a common observation here, that our Cause is the Cause of all Mankind, and that we are fighting for their liberty in defending our own."¹

Paine does not differ from this when he says, "One of the great advantages of the American Revolution has been, that it led to a discovery of the principles, and laid open the impositions of governments;"² or again, "In proportion as the independence of America became contemplated and understood, the local benefits of it to the immediate actors and the numerous benefits it promised mankind, appeared every day to be increasing; and we saw not a temporary good for the present race only, but a continued good to all posterity."³ It was the combined influence of Franklin and Paine that had penetrated French thought, and made it receptive to the Age of Reason and the Rights of Man. In the words of Paine, "The American constitutions were to liberty, what a grammar is to a language; they define its parts of speech, and practically construct them into syntax."⁴

¹ Writings, Vol. vii, p. 256.
³ Ibid. p. 100.

² Writings, Vol. ii, pp. 410-411.
⁴ Ibid. p. 336.

In 1780 Paine felt that he had a mission to perform in Europe, and was anxious to go to England. It seemed to him that the time was favorable for moving the British mind in the direction of peace, and thus ending the war. On the ninth of September he wrote,¹ "I do not suppose that the acknowledgment of Independence is at this time a more unpopular doctrine in England than the declaration of it was in America immediately before the publication of the pamphlet, 'Common Sense', and the ground appears as open for the one now as it did for the other then.-- The simple point I mean to aim at is, to make the acknowledgment of Independence a popular subject, and that not by exposing and attacking their errors, but by stating its advantages and apologizing for their errors by way of accomodating the measure to their pride."

This mission was not given to Paine, but when Col. John Laurens was sent to France for aid, he was reluctant to go, and would accept only on the condition of Paine's accompanying him. They sailed from Boston in 1781 and met Franklin in March. Paine and Franklin accomplished the mission, and received a gift of six millions from the King. It is probable that Franklin dissuaded Paine from going to England, for he returned with Col. Laurens, with a "charge of upwards of two thousand pounds sterling."²

The year 1783 brought Paine much relief. He felt that his political work was at an end, and he could now find leisure for his work in science. In taking his leave of politics, he reminded the Americans that "we are apt to be stunned by calmness when it comes

¹ Life, Vol. i, pp. 169-170.

² Writings, Vol. iv, p. 465.

too instantly upon us." "To ¹ see it in our power to make a world happy-- to teach mankind the art of being so," are responsibilities to be regarded gratefully. "But as the scenes of war are closed-- I therefore take my leave of the subject.-- And what ever country I may hereafter be in, I shall always feel an honest pride at the part I have taken and acted, and a gratitude to nature and providence for putting it in my power to be of some use to mankind."²

When Franklin returned to America Paine at once resumed his intimate relations with him and Franklin wrote to him, "Your present arduous undertaking,³ I easily conceive demands retirement, and tho' we shall reap the fruits of it, I can not help regretting the want of your abilities here where in the present moment, they might, I think, be successfully employed."⁴ Parties still run very high.-- Common Sense would unite them. It is to be hoped therefore it has not abandoned us forever."

Common Sense had not abandoned the country in its need, and in 1786 Paine wrote his "Dissertations on Government, the Affairs of the Bank, and Paper Money." Paine's interest in this bank was deep; no one had more confidence in it than he, for it had grown out of his subscription of \$500 for Washington's Army. To repeal its charter was to violate a contract, so the repeal had to be submitted to popular suffrage. Paine's pamphlet succeeded in its personal appeal and his ideas have been affirmed in every contention since.

Paine returned once more to his bridge, and began a lively correspondence with Franklin asking him⁵ "to bestow a few thoughts on

¹ Ibid. Vol. i, p. 371.

² Ibid. p. 376.

³ His bridge,

⁴ Life, Vol. i, p. 213.

⁵ Ibid. p. 218.

the subject and to communicate" any difficulties or doubts as to its efficiency. At another time he sent his models to Franklin with these words, "The gentleman, Mr. Hall, who presents you with this letter, has the care of two models for a bridge, one of wood, the other of cast iron, which I have the pleasure of submitting to you, as well for the purpose of showing my respect to you, as my patron in this country, as for the sake of having your opinion and judgment thereon."¹ When he came to Philadelphia, he saw a great deal of Franklin, at the "Society for Political Inquiries," which met in Franklin's library.

In 1787 he went to France, and Franklin's letters opened the door for him, and he was warmly received. John Hall's Diary has this interesting note,² "He is now going for England by way of France in the French packet which sails the 25th instant.-- He told me of the Committee's proceedings on Bridges and Sewers; anecdotes of Dr. Franklin who had sent a letter by him to the president or some one to communicate to the Society of Civil Architects, who superintended solely over bridges in France.-- The Doctor -- considers Mr. Paine as his adopted political Son.-- He told me many anecdotes of the Doctor, relating to national and political concerns, and observations of many aged and sensible men of his acquaintance in that country."

When Paine reached France he wrote to Franklin, "It must have been a very strong attachment that drew you from this country for your friends are very numerous and very affectionate."³

¹ Ibid.

² Quoted in Life, Vol. ii, p. 468.

³ Writings, Vol.

Paine, like Franklin, was a Deist, and like him too, he was tolerant of all beliefs. He declared his belief thus:¹ "I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. --I believe the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy.-- I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe." His "religion of humanity" admitted no infringement on the rights of man. The whole moral duty of man seemed to him to consist in imitating the goodness that God manifested to his creatures. Every act of persecution and revenge, every act of cruelty to man or animal is a violation of the moral law. His kinship with Franklin extended beyond their political relations. He shared, as Priestley did, Franklin's keen interest in science as well as his unfaltering pursuit of the greatest happiness of man. His optimism was tinged with Franklin's unlimited hope, and he realized his future as soon as he conceived it. The common sense philosophy of Paine was perceived by Franklin to be so like his own, that he was able to direct it into the most productive channels, and the eloquence of Paine in the French Revolution fell on ears that recognized the echo of Franklin's voice in the revolution in America, and Paine generously acknowledged Franklin's influence in his Rights of Man. There was nothing of mysticism in the philosophical theory of Paine, as there was none in that of Franklin. They loved their fellow men, upheld their rights, and, though hedged

¹
writings, Vol. iv, pp. 21-22.

about by criticism from their orthodox contemporaries, they looked, with a sublime faith, for a sphere of usefulness in the world to come. When Franklin's enfeebled life was drawing to a close, he made a plea for the emancipation of the negro and abolition of the slave trade. By a singular coincidence, Paine at the same time was interested in the same question, and looked to America for its solution. "I wish most anxiously to see my much loved America. It is the country from whence all reformation must originally spring. I despair of seeing the abolition of the infernal trade in negroes. We must push that matter further on your side of the water. I wish that a few well instructed could be sent among their brethren in bondage; for until they are able to take their own part nothing will be done."¹

Paine's estimate of Franklin is simple and sincere: "His mind was ever young; his temper ever serene; science that never grows gray was always his mistress. He was never without an object.--His life was devoted to the good and improvement of man. Let, then, those who profess a different creed, imitate his virtues, and excel him if they can."²

¹ Life, Vol. i, p. 271.

² Writings, Vol. iv, pp. 126 et 427.

III.

FRANKLIN AND DR. PRICE.

There is something in the story of Richard Price's changing the "pure atmosphere of Wales for the putrescent vapors of London," that recalls the circumstance in the life of Franklin when he went out into the world to seek his fortune. Price's father, a Dissenter with narrow prejudices, could not endure his son's broad and tolerant religious views, and cut him off from any share in his inheritance. This only strengthened the boy's determination to become a minister after his own convictions. "Having no conveyance, he had recourse to his brother, the heir of his father's fortune, who supplied him with a horse to carry himself and a servant as far as Cardiff, a distance of twenty miles, from where he was left to trudge on foot with his bundle in his hand to Bristol a further distance of forty miles. But luckily for him, a good-natured lady, seeing a youth in this forlorn condition, walking over rough and dirty roads, took him into her carriage part of the way, and so far relieved him of his fatigue and sorrow. From Bristol he set off in a conveyance, which to the best of my recollection he told me was no other than a broad-wheeled waggon."¹

Arrived in London, Price received scant encouragement from his uncle, a rigid Calvinist, who disliked the boy for his candid benevolent opinions, and saw no prospect of his success, "notwithstanding the excellence of his moral conduct." This uncle resented the boy's "daring to think for himself," and when Price became a Unitarian min-

¹

Memoirs of the Life of Richard Price, E. D. London, 1815, pp. 8-9.

ister, he is said to have exclaimed that "he had rather see him transformed into a pig, than that he should have been brought up to be a dissenting minister without believing in the Trinity."

Price's first appointment was at Stoke Newington, where he preached in various pulpits, particularly at Dr. Chandler's in the Old Jewry. Here he drew around him a small but devoted group of rational thinkers, and in 1756 he was invited to become the morning preacher at Newington Green. His work absorbed him so completely, that he "lamented as a trifling waste of time, the few hours he spent in the study of mathematics and philosophy, and even in the harmless relaxation of visiting his friends."¹

He made an exception, however, in the case of Dr. Franklin, whose friendship he had gained through his relations with John Canton, Dr. Andrew Kippis, and a small select group of philosophic members of the Royal Society. Price had contributed some mathematical papers to the Society, and in 1760 he wrote a Dissertation on Miracles. He read this article to his little group of intimates and published it with their approval. The following year he undertook to determine "from the number of times in which an unknown event has happened and failed, the chance that the probability of its happening in a single trial lies somewhere between any two degrees of probability that can be named."² This was sent to Franklin, who had returned to America, and Franklin had it published in the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society in 1763.

¹ Ibid. p. 20.

² Ibid. p. 21.

The next year Franklin was in England, representing the colonies in the Stamp Act dispute, and now was organized the "delightful Club" which met first at a coffee-house in St. Paul's Churchyard, but "whose meetings were afterward moved to the London Coffee-house Ludgate Hill."¹ Dr. Price used to set apart certain evenings in each week to meet Franklin and the other philosophical gentlemen there, and from these meetings dates his interest in national finances, population, and other political questions, that had been Franklin's problems since the early days of Poor Richard.

In 1751 Franklin had published some Observations on the Increase of Mankind and the Peopling of Countries. He turned these over to Price together with some statistics that he had gathered since their publication, and in 1769 Price addressed to him his "Observations on the Expectation of Lives-- the Increase of Mankind--and the Population of London," which were published in the Philosophical Transactions of that year. Franklin gathered data from every source for Dr. Price's work on Annuities, and when he made his trip on the continent he found much that was useful to his friend, and gave it generously.² He enlisted the services of William Franklin in gathering accounts from the colonies, which he said were agreeable to him, "but particularly to Dr. Price."

The breaking out of the American War brought Franklin and Price into the warmest kind of sympathy. Price was a profound humanitarian as well as a thrifty economist, and he was opposed to war as Franklin was, on every ground. When, in the winter of 1775, he saw that England was determined to repair her dilapidated finances

¹ Ibid. p. 48. ² See Writings, Vol. v, p. 406. ³ Ibid. Vol. vi, p. 32.

by a direct attack on the civil liberties of the colonists, he threw himself into the struggle with genuine sympathy. While Franklin was bending every effort to save the beautiful vase from being shattered, Dr. Price undertook to correct the general notions of liberty, and at the same time endeavored to promote a thorough knowledge of the rights which the colonists claimed.

Franklin was most anxious that this be done. He had returned to America in May, and found the temper of the Americans bent on resistance. His letters to his British friends, show how important he considered it to have British public opinion converted to the colonial point of view. In October he wrote, "Tell our dear good friend (Dr. Price) that America is determined and unanimous-- Britain at the expense of three millions has killed one hundred and fifty Yankees this campaign, which is twenty-thousand pounds a head; and at Bunker's Hill she gained a mile of ground, half of which she lost again by our taking a post on Ploughed Hill. During the same time sixty thousand children have been born in America. From these data his mathematical head will easily calculate the time and expense necessary to kill us all, and conquer the whole territory."¹

To another friend he wrote, "I am persuaded that the body of the British people are our friends; but they are changeable, and by your lying gazettes may soon be made our enemies."² Franklin knew that the voice of the English would soon be heard in relation to the American question. The colonies were contending for a principle, and it was absolutely necessary to get the colonial propaganda

¹Ibid. pp. 429-430.

²Ibid. p. 431.

abroad, if the civil liberties of the Americans were to be made secure. With unerring instinct for recognizing the capabilities of individual men, he saw that Dr. Price's service to liberty, was to promote a more correct general knowledge of the American controversy. What Common Sense did in America, Price's Observations on the American War accomplished in England. Behind these pamphlets was the mind of Franklin, creating a new current of thought in the direction of the rights of man.

Price's pamphlet was so eagerly and so universally read, that the press could not supply the demands for it. In the course of a few days several thousands were sold; and such was the rapid progress of the impression which it made, and of the admiration which it excited, that the friends of the Americans thought that they could not better serve the cause than by extending the sale of it to all ranks of society."¹ With generous zeal for liberty Dr. Price sacrificed all private emolument that might have come to him, and at the same time endured with heroic nobility all the "rancorous abuse which he received from the advocates of American subjection."

By this time the Parliament regarded the colonies as rebels, and all communication and direct intercourse with them was cut off. Franklin was sent to France, and was thus able to transmit to Price letters and information which would not, otherwise, have reached England. Price said that he had "become so marked and obnoxious" that he did not think it prudent to correspond with any one, and caution prevented him from writing to Franklin, but he said that information regarding the American situation would be most acceptable,

and that "there was less danger in receiving than in sending accounts."¹

Franklin was the channel through which the information came. In a letter to John Winthrop he said, "I forwarded your letter to Dr. Price, who was well lately; but his Friends on his Acct., were under some apprehensions from the Violence of the Government, in consequence of his late excellent Publications in favor of Liberty. I wish all the Friends of Liberty and of Man would quit that Sink of Corruption and leave it to its Fate."² Franklin continued to supply the material, and Price issued a second pamphlet with some additional observations on the nature and value of civil liberty, on the war with America, and following Franklin's hints to his "mathematical head," on the debts and resources of Great Britain.

Franklin sent, for use in this pamphlet, a report of the finances of M. Turgot's administration, and out of this began M. Turgot's correspondence with Price. At the same time Franklin's report of the persecutions that threatened Price, brought him an invitation to accept citizenship from the United States. Franklin, Lee, and Adams gave him the invitation together with a request for his services in assisting "to regulate the finances," and an offer to provide generously for these services. They even added a promise of "every assistance in our power to make your passage agreeable, as well as your reception and accommodation in our country."³

Price declined this offer, and set about to warn England of the dangers which the growing luxury of the rich and the increasing burden of the poor were threatening. He was one with Franklin in the belief that moderation and justice are the safeguards of liberty.

¹ Ibid. p. 65. ² Writings, Vol. vii, p. 57.

³ Life of Richard Price, D.D., p. 77.

By 1782 British public opinion had changed so notably that the old ministers resigned, and the new ministers set about at once to conciliate America. Franklin immediately wrote to Price, "I congratulate you on the late revolution in your public affairs.-- The change, however, in the sentiments of the nation, in which I see evident effects of your writings-- should encourage you to proceed.

The Ancient Roman and Greek orators could only speak to the number of citizens capable of being assembled within the reach of their voice,-- Now by the press we can speak to nations; and good books and well written pamphlets have great and general influence. The facility, with which the same truths may be repeatedly enforced by placing them daily in different lights in newspapers, which are everywhere read, gives a great chance of establishing them. -- I suppose we may now correspond with more freedom."¹

When the struggle was ended, and peace restored Price wrote an Advice to the People of America, which he published and distributed to them at his own expense. To it was appended a letter of M. Turgot's, which was inserted at the wish of Franklin, who obtained the necessary permission to use it. He also procured for him, some reports on the "immense powers of compound interest," and a new work on the Finances of France.²

When Franklin was called back to America, he had to leave without seeing the "good Doctor," It was a great disappointment, for he had labored "for Peace with more Earnestness to be happy" in the "sweet society" of the good souls at the London, who had escaped the contagion of a "perverse generation." Their correspondence was kept

¹ Writings, Vol. viii, p. 457.

² Ibid. Vol. ix, p. 286.

up, and Price sent him a copy of the Sermons, which were written as soon as the cessation of the war gave him leisure for his religious writings.

Franklin and Price were one in religion, and Franklin liked to take his friends to Newington Green, when Price occupied the pulpit. In 1772 he took Sir John Pringle to hear this preacher of "rational Christianity," and frequently heard other preachers of the kind, on Price's recommendation.

Price, like Franklin, was devoted to the practice of virtue. To improve himself and others was the great guiding principle of his life. He opposed tyranny and usurpation, just as Franklin did, because they bred corruption, and hence opposed virtue. He, too, condemned no man for want or excess of faith, and like Franklin he preferred the honest, though mistaken opinions of a humble mind to the soundest orthodoxy when joined with conceit and bigotry.

Franklin's Puritanism rejoiced in the conscientious candor of Dr. Price, and it was to him, in preference to all his optimistic friends that he sent his memoirs, desiring him to read it critically, and to give his candid opinion as to whether it had best be published or suppressed. When the town of Franklin wanted to honor the philosopher by erecting a steeple to his memory, if he would furnish the bell, he wrote to Dr. Price, "I have advis'd the sparing themselves the Expense of a steeple, for the present, and that they would accept of Books instead of a Bell, Sense being preferable to Sound."¹ He then requested Price to select books, "to the value of about Twenty-five Pounds, such as are proper to inculcate Principles

¹

Ibid. Vol. ix, p. 300.

of sound Religion and just Government." He made the further suggestion, "Besides your own Works, I would only mention, on the Recommendation of my sister, "Stennet's Discourses on Personal Religion", which may be one book of the Number, if you know and approve of it."² That Dr. Price complied with his request and suggestion is another evidence of the perfect understanding between these two men.

There can be no doubt that the friendship between these two apostles of liberty had a prodigious influence for good on civilized mankind; nor can it be doubted that the versatility, firmness, and tact of Franklin was in a large measure responsible for the converts to radicalism made by the writings of Dr. Price.

²
Ibid.

IV.

FRANKLIN AND PRIESTLEY.

Franklin's Autobiography ended with the year 1757 and does not contain any mention of his friendship with Dr. Priestley. His letters to Priestley extend over the period from 1772 to 1786, and show that these two philosophers were united by a variety of interests. Their acquaintance began in 1766. Priestley wrote to his friend Mr. Rotheram,¹ "I have lately been in London, and formed a most agreeable acquaintance with Dr. Franklin, Mr. Canton, Dr. Watson, and other philosophers and electricians. I have been engaged by them to write a Treatise on Electricity, in which I shall give a full history of all the discoveries, in the order of time in which they were made. I have made three or four new experiments myself, of which you will probably see an account in the 'Philosophical Transactions'. I do not recollect whether you had a taste for these subjects. I am enthusiastically fond of them, particularly since I got a little apparatus of my own, which I had a year or two before I came to Harrington."

These experiments took up much of his leisure time, as five hours of every day were employed in public or private lectures, and he spent a two months' vacation with his father-in-law at Bristol. He worked rapidly, perhaps hastily, although the work was well received, and within a year from the time he made the plan of his work, he sent a copy of his "History of Electricity" to Franklin in print. During the course of his electrical experiments, he kept up a constant correspondence with Franklin; a correspondence which he says,

¹ "Memoirs of Dr. Priestley;" Ed. by Butt, London 1831. Vol. I, pt. i, p56

"would have made a considerable volume, and took up much time."¹

In 1769 Dr. Priestley published his 'Chart of History' with this dedication, "To Benjamin Franklin Esq. D. D., F. R. S. this chart is, in testimony of esteem and friendship, inscribed by his most obliged humble servant, Joseph Priestley."² This had been preceded by a "Chart of Biography," which procured for him the title of "Doctor of Laws" from the University of Edinburgh. His experiments in electricity brought him to the notice of the Royal Society, to which he was recommended by Dr. Franklin, Mr. Canton, Dr. Watson, and Dr. Price.

He wrote to Dr. Price at this time, "I shall write out a full account of the new experiments I have mentioned to Dr. Franklin and Mr. Canton after a week or two, in which I shall have made other experiments which have a connexion with them. In the meantime my friends here think it will be best to mention them to some of the principal members, and to read the full account of them to the Society about the time of election; but I beg of you, dear Sir, and Mr. Canton, not to have me proposed at all, (if it be not done,) unless you be morally certain it will be carried."³ Dr. Priestley felt sure that the Royal Society was too Anglican to admit a Dissenter without opposition, and Franklin met the expected opposition when he tried to get the Copley Medal from the Society for Dr. Priestley. He wrote to Canton,⁴ "After the Society was gone, my Lord Moreton said (when I offered him the paper) that it ought to have been deliver'd before and read to the Society; he desired me to produce it to the Council. There the reading of it was opposed as not

¹ Ibid. p. 57.

² Works, Vol. XXIV, p. 477.

³ Works, Vol. I, part i, p. 58. ⁴ Writings, Ed. by Smyth, Macmillan & Co. New York, 1907, Vol. V, pp. 69-71.

being referr'd to them by the Society. But this was at last got over, by Dr. Moreton's proposing that the giving a Medal to Dr. Priestley should be taken into consideration, and that in order to judge the better of the Propriety of the proposal, the paper should be read. I was then desired as the best Judge present to give my Opinion of the Merit of the Experiments as to the Medal; which I did in plain Terms, declaring it as my judgment that the great Pains and Expense the Doctor had been at in making them and the Importance of the Experiments themselves, well deserved that Encouragement from the Society; and that it was a Mark of Distinction justly due to so much philosophical Industry and Sagacity." Here followed an account of the discussion that followed Franklin's remarks, and he concludes, "Thus the Business ended for that time; and how it will conclude at last seems an Uncertainty, for I think some Persons are busy in Opposition to the Measure. But I hope it will end in favour of Merit, in which case I think our Friend cannot miss it."

Franklin not only recommended Priestley "to favour," but he helped him to get his books abroad. Dr. Priestley consulted him at every turn and gratefully acknowledged his obligations. When he was making his experiments on "Fixed Air," Franklin was intensely interested and wrote from Paris,¹ "I rejoice to hear of your continual Progress in those useful discoveries; I find that you have set all the Philosophers of Europe at Work upon Fixed Air; and it is with great pleasure I observe how high you stand in their Opinion; for I enjoy my Friends' fame as my own."

¹
Writings, Vol. VII, p. 18.

It was a request from Priestley that brought out Franklin's "moral algebra."¹ "In the Affair of so much importance to you wherein you ask my Advice, I can not for want of sufficient premises advise you what to determine, but if you please I will tell you how. When those difficult Cases occur, they are difficult chiefly because while we have them under consideration, all the reasons pro and con are not present to the Mind at the same time; but sometimes one Set present themselves, and at other times another, the first being out of sight. Hence the various purposes or Inclinations that alternately prevail, and the Uncertainty that perplexes us. To get over this, my Way is, to divide half a sheet of Paper by a Line into two Columns; writing over one Pro and over the other Con. Then during three or four days' consideration, I put down under the different Heads short Hints of the different Motives, that at different Times occur to me, for or against the Measure. When I have thus got them all together in one view, I endeavor to estimate their respective Weights; and where I find two, one on each side, that seem equal, I strike them both out. If I find a Reason pro equal to some two Reasons con, I strike out three. If I judge some two Reasons con equal to some three Reasons pro, I strike out the five; and thus proceeding I find at length where the Ballance lies; and if after a Day or two of farther Consideration, nothing new of Importance occurs on either side, I come to a Determination accordingly. And, tho' the Weight of Reasons cannot be taken with the Precision of Algebraic quantities, yet, when each is considered, separately and

¹
Ibid. pp. 437-438.

comparatively, and the whole lies before me, I think I can judge better, and am less liable to make a rash step; and in fact I have found great Advantage from this kind of Equation, in what might be called Moral or Prudential Algebra."

In 1775 Dr. Priestley, upon the recommendation of Dr. Price left Leeds to become the literary companion of Lord Shelburne. In this situation he spent seven years, living in the summer with his family near the Earl's seat in Wiltshire, and spending the winter in Lord Shelburne's London house. In this same year the Royal Society gave him the Copley Medal, that Franklin had asked for, "as a faithful and unfading testimonial of their regard, and of the just sense they have of your merit, and of the persevering industry with which you have promoted the views, and thereby the honor of this Society."¹

Franklin was much pleased with Dr. Priestley's engagement with Lord Shelburne and wrote to John Winthrop,² "Dr. Priestley is now well provided for. Lord Shelburne is become his Patron, and desirous to have the Company of a Man of general Learning to read with him and superintend the Education of his Children, has taken him from his Congregation at Leeds, settled three hundred pounds a year upon him for ten Years, and two hundred pounds for life with a House to live in near his Country Seat. My Lord has a great Library there which the Doctor is now putting in Order and seems very happy in his new Situation. The learned Leisure he will now have, secure of a comfortable Substance, gives his Friends a pleasing Hope of many useful Works from his Pen. I expect him soon in town, when I shall communicate to him your Remarks on his last Book, for which I am sure he will feel himself much obliged to you."

¹ Works, Vol. I, part i, p. 194. ² Writings, Vol. vi, pp. 106-107.

One of Priestley's greatest pleasures during his relations with Lord Shelburne was his winter's residence in London. It was, he says, "the means of improving my acquaintance with Dr. Franklin. I was seldom many days without seeing him, and being members of the same Club, we constantly returned together."¹ Franklin's regard for this Club is seen in his messages to Priestley and Price after his return to America. In 1775 he sent his "sincere respects to the Club of honest Whigs" at the London Coffee-House.² In 1780 he wrote to Dr. Price, "Please to present my affectionate Respects to that honest, sensible, and intelligent Society who did me so long the Honor of admitting me to share in their instructive Conversations. I never think of the hours I so happily spent in that company without regretting that they are never to be repeated."³ In 1782 he wrote, "Please to present my best respects to our good old friends at the London Coffee-House. I often figure to myself the pleasure I should have in being once more seated among them."⁴

In 1774 Dr. Priestley published "An Address to the Protestant Dissenters of all Denominations, on the approaching Election of Members to Parliament, with respect to the State of Public Liberty in general and of American Affairs in particular." Franklin had been discussing the American situation with Priestley, who says, "It⁵ was at his request, enforced by that of Dr. Fothergill, that I wrote an anonymous pamphlet, calculated to show the injustice and impolicy of a war with the Colonies, previous to the meeting of a of a new Parliament.-- He corrected the press himself, and to a

¹ Works, Vol. I, part i, p. 209. ² Writings, Vol. VI, p. 430.

³ Writings, Vol. VIII, p. 8. ⁴ Ibid. p. 458.

⁵ Works, Vol. XXV, pp. 392-3.

passage in which I lamented the attempt to establish arbitrary power in so large a part of the British Empire, he added the following clause, 'To the imminent hazard of our most valuable commerce, and of that national strength, security, and felicity, which depend on union and liberty.'

"The unity of the British Empire in all its parts was a favorite idea of his. He used to compare it to a beautiful China vase, which if once broken, could never be put together again; and so great an admirer was he of the British constitution, that he said he saw no inconvenience from its being extended all over the globe.-- I think I knew him as well as one man can generally know another. The last day that he passed in England, having given out that he should depart the day before, we spent together without any interruption from morning until night.-- By many persons Dr. Franklin is considered as having been a cold-hearted man, so callous to every feeling of humanity, that the prospect of all the horrors of a civil war could not affect him. This was far from being the case. A great part of the day above-mentioned that we spent together, he was looking over a number of American newspapers, directing me what to extract from them for the English ones; and in reading them, he was frequently not able to proceed for the tears literally running down his cheeks. To strangers he was cold and reserved; but where he was intimate, no man indulged in more pleasantry and good humor."

Franklin had revealed his real feelings to Dr. Priestley before this. When he was accused of trying to embroil England and the Colonies by means of the Hutchinson letters, Franklin went through the ordeal without the least apparent emotion, but, "When the business was over," says Priestley, "Dr. Franklin took me by the hand

in a manner that indicated some feeling.-- The next morning I breakfasted with the doctor, when he said, he had never before been so sensible of the power of a good conscience; for that if he had not considered the thing for which he had been so much insulted as one of the best actions of his life, and what he should certainly do again in the same circumstances, he could not have supported it."¹

Franklin's affection for Priestley was real and enduring. He wrote in 1782,² "I love you as much as ever, and I love all the honest souls that meet at the London Coffee-House. I only wonder how it happened that they and all my friends in England came to be such good creatures in the midst of so perverse a generation. I long to see you and them once more, and I labor for Peace with more Earnestness that I may again be happy in your sweet society."

Franklin and Priestley had not only a common interest in science, they were radicals in religion but radicals with a difference. Priestley says of his religion,³ "I see the greatest reason to be thankful to God for the pious care of my parents and friends, in giving me religious instruction. My mother was a woman of exemplary piety, and my father also had a strong sense of religion, praying with his family morning and evening, and carefully teaching his children and servants the Assembly's Catechism, which was all the system of which he had any knowledge. In the latter part of his life, he became very fond of Mr. Whitefield's writings, and other works of a similar kind, having been brought up in the principles of Calvinism and adopting them, but without giving much attention to matters of speculation, and entertaining no bigoted aversion to

¹ "Works," XXV, p. 394. ² "Writings," Vol. iii, p. 453.

³ "Works," Vol. I, part i, pp. 10-11.

those who differed from him on the subject.-- Thus I was brought up with sentiments of piety, but without bigotry; and having from my earliest years, given much attention to the subject of religion, I was as much confirmed as I well could be in the principles of Calvinism, all the books that came my way having that tendency." His "excellent aunt," who took the place of his mother, after his mother's death, was "truly Calvinistic" in principle, but was so tolerant that her "home was the resort of all the Dissenting ministers in the neighborhood without distinction; and those who were most obnoxious on account of their heresy, were almost as welcome to her, if she thought them good and honest men, (which she was not unwilling to do) as any other."¹

Priestley must have done much individual work while he was at Daventry. He says, "No provision was made for teaching the learned languages. We had even no compositions or orations in Latin. Our course of lectures was also defective in containing no lectures on the Scriptures, or on ecclesiastical history, and by the students in general-- commentators in general and ecclesiastical history also were held in contempt."² He was not a consistent Christian, if indeed he was one, passing from Calvinism to Arianism, and then on to Socinianism. He professed his belief in miracles,³ but declared that all Christianity had been corrupted, and regarded the primitive Christians as Unitarians.⁴

Franklin says his parents gave him religious impressions early and brought him "through his childhood piously in the Dissenting way." He adds, "But I was scarce fifteen, when, after doubting by

¹ Ibid. ² Ibid. p. 26. ³ "Works," xxi, p. 92.

⁴ Ibid. xix, p. 295.

turns of several points, as I found them disputed in the several books I read, I began to doubt of Revelation itself. Some books against Deism fell into my hands.-- It happened that they wrought an effect on me quite contrary to what was intended by them; for the arguments of the Deists, which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much stronger than the refutations; in short, I soon became a thorough Deist."¹ In 1731 he wrote the following essentials of religion:

"That there is one God who made all things.

"That he governs the World by his providence.

"That he ought to be worshipped by adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving. But that the most acceptable service of God is doing good to man.

"That the soul is immortal.

"And that God will certainly reward virtue and punish vice, either here or hereafter."²

In 1764 he told his daughter to "go constantly to church whoever preaches."³ In 1774 he was attending services at Lindsey's Unitarian Church in London, and in 1790 he said, "I have ever let others enjoy their religious Sentiments without reflecting on them for those that seemed to me unsupportable and even absurd. All sects here, and we have a great variety, have experienced my good will in assisting them with Subscriptions for building their new places of worship; and as I have never opposed any of their Doctrines, I hope to get out of the world in peace with them all."⁴ This tolerance was a part of Franklin's philosophy of utility and he only gave expression to it at the request of Ezra Stiles who said, "As much as I know Doctor Franklin, I have not an idea of his religious Sentiments." Doctor Priestly lamented that he was an unbeliever, and that his great influence tended to make others unbelievers. "To me, however, Priestley

¹ Writings, Vol. i. p. 295. ² Ibid. pp. 340-341. ³ Ibid. iv, p. 287.

⁴ Ibid. Vol. x. p. 85.

says, "he acknowledged that he had not given so much attention as he ought to have done to the evidences of Christianity, and desired me to recommend him a few treatises on the subject, such as I thought most deserving of his notice, but not of great length, promising to read them, and give me his sentiments on them."¹ Priestley gave him some pamphlets which the Unitarian Book Society had published, together with his own "Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion." Franklin never found "the leisure" to enjoy the "discussion" that Dr. Priestley invited, although his letters contain inquiries about the "Unitarian Church in Essex Street," the "honest minister of it," and other of Priestley's colleagues. In 1788 he asked Benjamin Vaughan to remember him "affectionately to -- the honest heretic, Dr. Priestley. I do not call him honest by way of distinction; for I think all the heretics I have known have been virtuous men. They have the virtue of fortitude, or they would not venture to own their heresy; and they can not afford to be deficient in any of the other virtues as that would give advantage to their many enemies; and they have not, like orthodox sinners such a number of friends to excuse or justify them. Do not, however, mistake me. It is not to my good friend's heresy that I impute his honesty. On the contrary, it is his honesty that has brought upon him the character of heretic."²

Franklin and Priestley thought alike on the question of happiness. They agreed that the purpose of life was not "to form a shining and popular character," but a useful one, "this being also the only foundation of real happiness."³ Happiness was to be distributed. It was to be found in service and in emancipation. In this Priestley

¹ Works, Vol. I, pt. i, p. 212. ² Writings, Vol. ix, p. 677.

³ Works, Vol. xxv, p. 6.

and Franklin were one, thus Priestley ¹ said, "With your immortal Franklin, I say, "where liberty is, there is my home."

Franklin entered the world of politics early, and it was with keen regret that Priestley saw him forsake for it the attractions of science. In 1774 in the preface to the "History of Electricity" he wrote, "Here my reader will thank me, and the writer will I hope forgive me, if I quote a passage from the postscript of a letter which I formerly received from that excellent, and, in my opinion, not too enthusiastical philosopher, Father Beccaria, of Turin.

'Mi spiace che il mondo politico ch'è pur tanto passeggero, rubbi il grande Franklin al mondo della natura, che non sa ne cambiare ne mancare.' "

In 1769 Dr. Priestley wrote a pamphlet on "The Present State of Liberty in Great Britain and Her Colonies." It was published anonymously during the Wilkes affair and reviewed the question of colonial taxation. The following passage shows that, like the Priestley History Lectures, it was influenced by Franklin. In 1766 when the Commons examined Franklin, he was asked,² "Would the repeal of the Stamp Act be any discouragement to your manufactures? Will the people that have begun to manufacture decline it?" "Yes," replied Franklin, "I think they will, especially if at the same time, trade is opened again, so that remittances can be easily made." When, at the close of the examination, he was asked, "What used to be the pride of the Americans?" he answered, "To indulge in the fashions and manufactures of Great Britain." To the question, "What is now their pride?", he replied, "To wear their old cloaths over again, till they can make new ones."³ Priestley's parallel passage runs; "But

¹ Ibid. p. 122. ² Writings, Vol. ix, p. 447. ³ Ibid. p. 448.

will not the colonists choose to manufacture for themselves? A. It is far from being their interest to commence manufactures, and nothing but necessity can drive them to it.-- Few hands being at liberty to apply to labor or manufactures, their work is so dear that it will always be for their interest to purchase of us, rather than supply themselves."¹

During Priestley's residence with Lord Shelburne, Franklin was absorbed in the question of the American War. Priestley's interest was lively too, and one of his anxieties during his jaunt on the continent with Lord Shelburne was the state of American affairs. In October 1774 he wrote to Mr. Lindsey from Paris,² "We receive the English papers here very irregularly, so that we have sometimes been a fortnight behind hand, which in the present very critical state of American affairs, is the source of great anxiety to me. I would give a good deal to know what you know at this moment. Perhaps you know the issue of the congress, and of the troubles which seemed to be beginning to break out at Boston."

Franklin's letters to Priestley after his return to America, relate, almost entirely, to the struggle going on. He asks him to tell their "good dear friend, (Dr. Price)" who sometimes doubts the firmness of the Americans, that "America is determined and unanimous."³ In December 1776 Franklin was sent to Paris and early the next year in reply to Priestley's question he wrote, "Do not believe the reports you hear of our internal divisions. We are, I believe, as much united as any people ever were and as firmly."⁴

¹ Works, Vol. xxii, pp. 397-398.

² Works, Vol. I, part i, p. 253.

³ Writings, Vol. vi, p. 430.

⁴ Ibid. Vol. vii, p. 19.

When Dr. Priestley was about to sever his relations with Lord Shelburne, Franklin once more recommended his system of moral algebra, as the proper means to solve Priestley's case. He further suggested that he take a college position in America, but, with his usual good practical sense, reminded him that such an engagement would afford him no leisure for his scientific investigation.

Franklin's last letters to Dr. Priestley are warm, and show that he was not unwilling to reveal to him his longing for peace and freedom from responsibility. He complimented his "good heretic" on his zeal for souls, and wonders if devils do not treat each other with more humanity than men do. He was interested in his observations and experiments to the last. "I know of no Philosopher who starts so much good game for the Hunters after Knowledge as you do. Go on and prosper." ¹

In December of 1789, Franklin expressed himself thus on the Revolution in France: "The Convulsions in France are attended with some disagreeable circumstances; but if by the struggle she obtains and secures for the Nation its future Liberty, and a good Constitution, a few years' Enjoyment of those Blessings will amply repair all the Damages their Acquisition may have occasioned. God grant, that not only the Love of Liberty, but a thorough Knowledge of the Rights of Man, may pervade all the Nations of the Earth, so that a Philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its Surface, and say, "This is my Country."² Dr. Priestley so heartily approved of this last sentiment of Franklin, that he became a citizen of France to show his love of liberty, and not, as Burke said, "on account of his declared hostility to the constitution of England."³

¹ Writings, Vol. ix, p. 328.

² Writings, Vol. x, p. 72.

³ Works, Vol. xxv, p. 141.

In 1790 Priestley was involved in the Birmingham controversies, that led to his migration to America. It is safe to assume that his interest in "Political Arithmetic" took him away from Franklin's "Prudential Algebra" and left him open to his enemies. Franklin died in April "in a good old age at the end of a life of laborious and glorious usefulness."¹ Like all pioneers, the Radical Franklin experienced enough bitter to make his life sweet. Priestley like most disciples, if not eager to provoke controversy, did not hesitate to draw his sword.

The relations between these two men, radicals in religion and politics, and explorers in the world of natural science, show quite conclusively that radicalism was as indigenous and as thrifty a product of New England as it was of the Mother Country.

¹
Ezra Stiles: Literary Diary, p. 391.

V.

CONCLUSION

Long before the ideas of democracy and the language of liberty came into vogue in England, Benjamin Franklin had introduced them into the epigrams and Americanisms that gave flavor to his earliest writings. As early as 1744, when ordering books from William Strahan he said, "Your Authors know but little of the Fame they have on this side of the Ocean. We are a kind of Posterity in respect to them. We read their Works with perfect impartiality, being at too great a distance to be byassed by the Factions, Parties, and Prejudices that prevail among you."¹ This expresses precisely the relation that existed between Franklin and the English Radicals. He was a posterity with respect to them, and his years of association with the democratic life and thought of the land of the Pilgrim Fathers, had broadened his view beyond any petty faction, or personal bias.

Later in the same year he wrote, "Our governments, parliaments, wars, treaties, expeditions, fashions, etc., though matters of great and serious consequence to us, can seem but trifles to you." Here Franklin sees the situation exactly as it is. The colonists had emancipated themselves, and were governed by England "at the expense only of a little pen, ink, and paper."² The loyalty of the colonists was the loyalty of the imagination. The Mother Country, gov-

¹ Writings, Vol. ii, p. 242.

² Ibid. Vol. iv, p. 419.

erning by a thread, was an alma mater of their own creation. Born on the "stern and rock-bound coast" and glowing with the life and vigor of an unfettered childhood, the colonists saw only the glory of their own rising sun, and clothed the Empire that claimed their loyalty, with the splendor of their own freedom.

When the Commons asked Franklin if he did not know that there was, in the Pennsylvania charter, "an express reservation of the right of parliament to lay taxes there," he replied, "I know there is a clause in the charter, by which the King grants that he will levy no taxes on the inhabitants, unless it be with the consent of the assembly, or by an act of parliament."¹ Then they asked him how the assembly could assert that the stamp act was an infringement. Franklin's reply is most significant. "They understood it thus; by the same charter, and otherwise, they are entitled to all the privileges and liberties of Englishmen; they find in the great charters, and the petition and declaration of rights, that one of the privileges of English subjects is, that they are not to be taxed but by their common consent; they have therefore relied upon it, from the first settlement of the province, that the parliament never would, nor could, by colour of that clause in the charter, assume a right of taxing them, till it had qualified itself to exercise such right, by admitting representatives of the people to be taxed, who ought to make a part of that common consent."² Here is the exact temper of the Americans. The spirit of independence and non-conformity that gave birth to the colonies, was now demanding that parliament qualify itself to conform to their demands.

¹ Ibid. p. 445.

² Ibid. p. 445.

Franklin represented this American Spirit. By culture, travel, opportunity, and desire he was an Englishman, but his sympathies, aspirations, and convictions were those of America. It was the American Franklin, glowing with a century of self-expression, that demanded "the common rights of Englishmen," the common rights of man. The humanitarian Franklin shared his "three puffy rolls" with a needy mother and child; the English Franklin enjoyed the entertainment at the London ale-house, when the author of The Fable of the Bees attracted a group of free-thinkers by his facetious conversation, but the Puritan Franklin renounced the errata of his life, and protested "Except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it."¹ The English Franklin was one with Burke and the whig principles of 1765, but Franklin, the Puritan radical, and the liberal dissenters were one in 1775.

It was natural for the English radicals to turn to America as the most likely place for their dreams to come true. Like Paine, they saw in Franklin's cause, the cause of mankind, and the moment seemed at hand to make the universal social contract. The principle of the inalienable rights of man expressed itself politically in democracy, and religiously in Deism. Dr. Priestley looked for his Utopia in a reform centering around the church, and from such a reform he looked for the greatest happiness. Dr. Price saw the weaknesses of the British Empire, and felt that reform must begin with the correction of the colonial policy. Dr. Andrew Kippis, another of the honest souls, felt that the fire of emancipation must be fanned by teaching the principles of liberty, and his success is

¹
Ibid. Vol. ix, p. 601.

attested in the life of Godwin, his most notable pupil, who passed the torch to his ardent disciple Shelley, who pined "for what is not."

Franklin's theory of reform was more inclusive, and more distinctly individualistic. It began at home, within the man. Before erecting an edifice for the perfection of the world, he laid the moral foundation within himself, in his own life. Mather's Essay to do Good was translated into his own experience, and together with the "decent plainness and manly freedom," that was his inheritance, urged him to try to make "the world safe for democracy." Fully persuaded, by actual experience with men, of the utility of "evenness of temper and cheerfulness of conversation," he cultivated a graceful urbanity and delightful amenity, so that "for fifty years no dogmatical expression" escaped from him. In this way he drew the English radicals toward him, but kept free from all their disagreeable by-products, by avoiding controversy and turning even his enemies to use.

Through the "Club of honest Whigs" he stimulated English radicalism to the point of an "inquiry into political justice," but his radical descendants in England failed to grasp the sage conclusion of his closing years: "The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men."¹ The compliment he bestowed on his Quaker friend, Dr. Fothergill, might well be applied to him: "He was a great doer of good."²

¹ Ibid. vol. ix, p. 391.

² Memoirs of John Fothergill, D. D., John Croakley Lettsom, Ed. 4, London, 1786, p. 173.

APPENDIX I.

Franklin's conception of a free and happy people, in 1772, was such as exists when every man is a freeholder, has a vote in public affairs, lives in a comfortable house, and has plenty of good food. In 1787 he opposed vigorously a proposal to limit suffrage to freeholders, as tending to lower the ideals of the poorer classes.¹

APPENDIX II.

In 1780 Franklin wrote to Dr. Priestley,² "I always rejoice to hear of your being still employed in experimental Researches into Nature and of the Success you meet with. The rapid Progress true science now makes occasions my regretting sometimes that I was born so soon." Priestley's ability to start "new game" for hunters in the world of science, was known to Thomas Jefferson. The relations between Jefferson and Priestley were most friendly, and Jefferson's election to the presidency prevented Priestley's being returned to England under the Alien and Sedition Act.

Jefferson shared Franklin's high esteem for Priestley's investigations in science. In 1800 Priestley wrote to his friend Mr. Russell, "Mr. Jefferson writes to consult me about the plan of a new college, which the State of Virginia is going to establish and endow."³ Priestley gave him his "best advice," and wrote later that, "Mr. Jefferson approved of it." In December of the same year he wrote to Mr. Lindsey that Jefferson had approved the plan he sent

¹ Writings, Vol. ix, pp. 590-607. ² Writings, Vol. iii, pp. 9-10.

³ Works, Vol. I, Pr. ii, p. 427.

him for the "constitution" of the new college."¹ The prominence of chemistry in the curriculum of University of Virginia shows Priestley's influence.

Dr. Priestley became sincerely attached to Jefferson. He spoke of him as a "man of great prudence and moderation, and if it be possible, he will heal their differences, and keep the country in peace,"² and again as "every thing that the friends of liberty can wish."³ He dedicated to him his "History of the Church," and Jefferson accepted it as a precious testimony that his sincere desire to do what was right and just, had been received with candor. He invited Priestley to visit him, but Priestley found the "distance too great and the travelling too inconvenient for a person of his age and health."⁴ It is probable that this friendship gave Priestley an opportunity to finish the work which would have been done with Franklin's cooperation, if he had not been "born too soon."

¹ Ibid. p. 450.

² Ibid. p, 453.

³ Ibid. p. 476.

⁴ Works, Vol. I, pt. ii, p. 501.

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